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ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	AID-01	AMAD-01	CIAE-00	SJK-01	DODE-00	DS-00
	EB-01	HA-09	H-01	INRE-00	INR-01	IO-19	LAB-04
	L-03	ADS-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	PA-01
	PM-01	PRS-01	P-01	RP-10	SDEL-01	SIL-01	SNP-01
	SP-01	SR-01	SS-01	STR-20	TRSE-00	T-01	USIE-00

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-----B1CFD2 292146Z /38

P 292143Z NOV 91
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6490
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LIMA
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS12700

CINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PHUM, PGOV, PINS, ASEC, SOCI, VE
SUBJECT: CAP SPEAKS OUT ON STUDENT PROTESTS

REF: (A) CARACAS 12653 (B) FBIS 272032Z DATED 27 NOV

1. (C) SUMMARY: ON NOV. 28 PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ ADDRESSED THE NATION ON THE ISSUE OF STUDENT PROTESTS, AGAIN APOLOGIZING FOR DEATHS AND OFFERING TO
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MEET WITH STUDENT GROUPS. HE CALLED COUP RUMORS AN OFFENSE AGAINST VENEZUELAN SOCIETY AND THE ARMED FORCES. NOV. 28 ANOTHER STUDENT WAS KILLED, APPARENTLY BY THE NATIONAL GUARD, IN BARQUISIMETO, AND INCIDENTS OCCURRED IN THREE OTHER CITIES -- BUT NOT IN CARACAS. A MAJOR HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP EXPECTS THE PROTESTS TO QUIET DOWN AS CHRISTMAS NEARS, AND IT BLAMES THE DEMONSTRATIONS PARTLY ON THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR'S FAILURE TO EXERCISE LEADERSHIP. END SUMMARY

RADIO ADDRESS

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2. (U) PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ (CAP) DEVOTED HIS NOV. 28 WEEKLY RADIO BROADCAST TO THE SUBJECT OF STUDENT PROTEST AND ITS IMPLICATIONS. ONCE AGAIN, HE APOLOGIZED FOR THE RECENT DEATHS OF STUDENTS, SAYING THERE WAS NO EXCUSE FOR THEM. WITH REFERENCE TO ISSUES OF CONCERN TO STUDENTS, CAP REPEATED THAT THE GOV DOES NOT PLAN TO PRIVATIZE EDUCATION, SAID THE GOV "RELIGIOUSLY" PAYS TO BUS DRIVERS THE SUBSIDY FOR STUDENT FARES, INVITED STUDENTS TO REPORT BUS DRIVERS WHO REFUSE TO PICK THEM UP, AND JUSTIFIED THE SUSPENSION OF CLASSES. HE ALSO DENOUNCED "PROFESSIONAL AGITATORS", WHOM HE BLAMED FOR TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE CURRENT SITUATION. CAP ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD MEET ON NOV. 29 WITH OFFICIALS OF STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS.

3. (U) IN THE SAME RADIO ADDRESS, CAP EXCORIATED THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR STARTING RUMORS ABOUT A "POSSIBLE COUP D'ETAT". THESE RUMORS, HE SAID, ARE "AN OFFENSE AGAINST
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VENEZUELAN SOCIETY THAT KNOWS THAT ONLY IN DEMOCRACY LIES THE FUTURE OF THE COUNTRY. AND IT IS ALSO AN OFFENSE AGAINST THE ARMED FORCES, WHICH ARE A SOLID AND IRREVOCABLE BULWARK SUSTAINING THE VENEZUELAN CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER."

INCIDENTS

4. (U) MEANWHILE, THE FOLLOWING INCIDENTS OCCURRED IN VENEZUELA ON THE 28TH:

- IN BARQUISIMETO, IN THE STATE OF LARA, A 23 YEAR-OLD AGRONOMY STUDENT WAS KILLED BY A GUNSHOT AFTER NATIONAL GUARDSMEN SURROUNDED A DEMONSTRATION. SOME REPORTS SAY THE BULLET CAME FROM THE TYPE OF RIFLE CARRIED BY THE GUARD.

- IN MIRANDA STATE, STUDENTS BURNED A TRUCK AND, WHEN THE NATIONAL GUARD ARRIVED TO DISPERSE THEM, A 26-YEAR OLD STUDENT WAS WOUNDED BY PLASTIC BULLETS.

- IN MERIDA CITY, MERIDA STATE, TWO PASSENGERS IN AN INTER-CITY BUS WERE HURT WHEN HOODED PROTESTERS TRIED

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UNSUCCESSFULLY TO STOP THE VEHICLE.

- IN MARACAIBO, PROTESTERS BURNED A TELEPHONE COMPANY TRUCK IN FRONT OF THE UNIVERSITY.

5. (U) FOLLOW-UP: REF A REPORTED OUR OBSERVATIONS OF THE NOV. 27 MARCH IN CARACAS. NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS SINCE
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THEN REPORT THAT AT LEAST THREE INDIVIDUALS WERE HURT IN INCIDENTS CONNECTED WITH THAT PROTEST. AT THE VERY BEGINNING OF THE MARCH (BEFORE POLOFF ARRIVED), AN UNDERCOVER POLICEMAN WAS DETECTED, BEATEN, AND STABBED BY PROTESTERS. MUCH LATER, AFTER THE EVENTS IN THE PLAZA CARACAS AND AT THE CONGRESS, SMALL BANDS OF STUDENTS RE-GROUPED IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA. DESULTORY SKIRMISHING CONTINUED FOR ANOTHER TWO HOURS, AND DURING THIS TIME ONE STUDENT WAS HIT BY PLASTIC BULLETS, A POLICEMAN WAS REPORTEDLY HURT "WHILE FIRING A SHOTGUN", AND TWO INDIVIDUALS WERE ARRESTED.

6. (U) ALTHOUGH NO SET OF DEMANDS WAS PRESENTED DURING THE MARCH ITSELF, A REPORTER RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING LIST

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 CARACAS 12700

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FROM SOME OF THE PARTICIPANTS:

- "RECTIFICATION" OF THE GOV'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
POLICIES;

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- FREEZING OF GAS PRICES AND LOWERING OF STUDENT FARES;
- PUNISHMENT FOR THOSE WHO KILL STUDENTS, AND REMOVAL OF
TWO OFFICIALS OF THE METROPOLITAN POLICE;
- IMMEDIATE RESUMPTION OF CLASSES; AND
- A MEETING WITH CAP.

HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP

7. (C) ON NOV. 29 POLOFF TALKED WITH ONE OF THE LEADING
HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS IN CARACAS, PROVEA. A PROVEA
SPOKESMAN SAID HIS GROUP WAS PLEASED BY THE PROMPT
ARREST OF THE POLICE OFFICER APPARENTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR
THE NOV. 20 KILLINGS AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE WILL BE
PROSECUTED. (HE EXPLAINED THE QUICK RESPONSE BY NOTING
THAT THERE WERE MANY WITNESSES TO THE ACT, AND THAT THE
"FISCALIA" -- PUBLIC MINISTRY -- QUICKLY INVOLVED ITSELF

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IN THE INVESTIGATION.) PROVEA, HE SAID, EXPECTS STUDENT PROTESTS TO DECREASE BECAUSE OF THE PROXIMITY OF CHRISTMAS VACATION AND BECAUSE THERE IS NO LEADERSHIP BEHIND THE DEMONSTRATIONS. THE SPOKESMAN COMMENTED THAT ONE OF THE FACTORS EXACERBATING THE DISTURBANCES WAS THE VACUUM OF GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY. HE MENTIONED THE FAILURE BY THE CURRENT MINISTER OF INTERIOR TO MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT REGARDING THE PROTESTS.

8. LATE BREAKING NEWS: POLOFF, WHILE DELIVERING A LETTER TO A G-15 FOREIGN MINISTER AT THE HILTON,
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AFTERNOON OF NOVEMBER 29, OBSERVED THAT THE
"ENCAPUCHADOS" (HOODED PEOPLE) WERE AT IT AGAIN -- TWO
TRUCKS HAD BEEN HIJACKED AND SET AFIRE IN PLAZA
VENEZUELA, AND TRAFFIC THROUGHOUT THE AREA WAS
DISRUPTED. THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF THE HILTON, WHERE
THE DELEGATIONS ARE BASED, WAS PEACEFUL. SKOL

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